

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 02-11-2012		2. REPORT TYPE FINAL		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Regional Organizations and Opportunity in Nigeria				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  Anthony L. Allou III  Paper Advisor: Ivan Luke				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT In its ongoing effort to support regional stability in western Africa, AFRICOM must balance regional organizational support with traditional bilateral assistance mechanisms in order to develop a sound relationship with the Nigerian security establishment. Nigeria is a critical actor in Sub-Saharan Africa that is plagued by internal and external security threats that require ongoing stability operations to manage or overcome. In addition, Nigeria exerts influential leadership in stability operations in Africa, particularly in the western region. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States are intergovernmental organizations that have developed ambitious peace and security agendas. While both fill a niche the U.N. is either unable or unwilling to fill, ECOWAS has a greater vested interest in western Africa and is therefore the most likely and most effective actor on that operational environment. AFRICOM, as the U.S. Geographic Combatant Command with responsibility for western Africa, is philosophically aligned with both Nigerian and IGO stability operations imperatives. However, it is challenged in its ability to engage directly with the IGOs, something that it must be able to do if it is to have a significant role across the spectrum of Nigerian and regional security operations.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Nigeria, ECOWAS, AFRICOM, African Union, IGO, Security, Stability					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES  19	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556

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Newport, R.I.**

**“Regional Organizations and Opportunity in Nigeria”**

**by**

**Anthony L. Allou, III**

**CAPT USN**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**02 November 2012**

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### **Paper Abstract**

In its ongoing effort to support regional stability in western Africa, AFRICOM must balance regional organizational support with traditional bilateral assistance mechanisms in order to develop a sound relationship with the Nigerian security establishment. Nigeria is a critical actor in Sub-Saharan Africa that is plagued by internal and external security threats that require ongoing stability operations to manage or overcome. In addition, Nigeria exerts influential leadership in stability operations in Africa, particularly in the western region. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States are intergovernmental organizations that have developed ambitious peace and security agendas. While both fill a niche the U.N. is either unable or unwilling to fill, ECOWAS has a greater vested interest in western Africa and is therefore the most likely and most effective actor on that operational environment. AFRICOM, as the U.S. Geographic Combatant Command with responsibility for western Africa, is philosophically aligned with both Nigerian and IGO stability operations imperatives. However, it is challenged in its ability to engage directly with the IGOs, something that it must be able to do if it is to have a significant role across the spectrum of Nigerian and regional security operations.

## **Introduction**

The U.S. develops engagement strategies with a host of nations in support of national interests across diplomatic, informational, military and economic lines of effort. With respect to Nigeria and the use of national military power this is a particularly complex problem. U.S. leaders have stated the importance of Nigeria to our regional goals. The global nature of possible terrorist threats in western Africa, and in northern Nigeria specifically, coupled with transnational threats such as piracy, requires a strategy of partnership in order to be effective. The U.S. needs to consider what constitutes the best response to these issues, in particular, how that response balances bilateral, sub-regional or larger regional relationships with each other. To answer that question, this paper will show that in its ongoing efforts to grow regional stability in western Africa, AFRICOM must balance regional organizational support with traditional bilateral assistance mechanisms in order to develop a sound relationship with the Nigerian security establishment.

In order to support this thesis the first section of the paper discusses the importance of Nigeria in Africa, with critical factors of that importance being its own fragility coupled with the role it plays in regional security leadership. The second section of the paper links Nigerian regional influence to the two vehicles which dominate peace and security in western Africa, namely the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Each organization is treated more or less separately, but the strongest and most important connection between Nigeria and regional stability is the linkage with ECOWAS. The third section examines AFRICOM as the focus of U.S. military activity in the region, how it engages in the region today and challenges to future engagement. Finally,

the paper will provide recommendations on how and in what areas of military operations AFRICOM might shape their involvement with regional organizations.

### **Nigeria: Critical to African Security**

This section of the paper addresses Nigeria as an important and influential member of the western Africa security environment. This section briefly highlights the importance of Nigeria and its complexity, and then develops the nature of the security threats, both internal and external, that face the country. In the context of these threats, Nigeria is shown to exhibit the characteristics of a fragile state, after which its supporting security infrastructure is discussed. The last part of this section describes Nigeria's leadership role as a multi-national or regional security partner, further supporting the idea that the U.S. must establish a robust partnership with Nigeria.

During opening remarks to begin the U.S. – Nigeria Binational Commission on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns stated that the “United States approaches this partnership from the fundamental premise that Nigeria is one of the most strategically important nations in Sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>1</sup> In western Africa, there is certainly no more influential country than Nigeria. It boasts the continent's largest population as well as extensive oil reserves to go along with nagging internal security issues and extensive involvement with international governmental organizations (IGOs).<sup>2</sup> With a population of over 160 million people crossing more than 250 ethnicities, Nigeria is a complex landscape of economic and religious tensions that can escalate into violent confrontations between groups. For cross border threats such as criminal trafficking, Nigeria has border security

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<sup>1</sup> Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns (Remarks, U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission “A Rising Partnership”, Washington, DC, 4 June 2012).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State Bureau of African Affairs, “Background Note: Nigeria,” accessed 28 August 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2836.htm>.

cooperation agreements in place with each of its four neighboring countries, an encouraging development for regional security.<sup>3</sup> To complicate matters, since achieving independence in 1960, Nigeria's government has undergone no fewer than 11 major revisions or coups, leading to what is hopefully a more stable democratic environment today.<sup>4</sup> These issues make Nigeria a complex environment in which to operate, an environment further complicated by the potential for external violent extremist organization (VEO) involvement.

Although there are several concerns for the U.S. where Nigerian security is concerned, of particular interest is the rise of Boko Haram, an extremist religious ideological group purporting to support Muslim beliefs, primarily in the northern regions of Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> This group has been particularly active since the 2011 elections, to include attacks as far south as the capital of Abuja where it was able to set off a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) at a police headquarters.<sup>6</sup> The group's actions have gained U.S. interest over the past few years, in particular as concerns mount that the group is exploring additional international relationships.<sup>7</sup> These concerns are also highlighted by two separate kidnapping events that are reputedly attributable to groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, to include the western African franchise known as al'Qaeda in the Magreb (AQIM).<sup>8</sup> So while external terror connections may be immature, they pose a significant potential security risk to the U.S. in the future.

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<sup>3</sup> IHS Jane's, "Nigeria Executive Summary: Nigeria at a Glance," Accessed 28 August 2012, <https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1305553&PubAbrev=WAFR>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria."

<sup>5</sup> John Campbell, "Nigeria's Battle for Stability," *The National Interest* 118 (March/April 2012): 31.

<sup>6</sup> IHS Jane's, "Nigeria Executive Summary."

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, "Nigeria's Battle for Stability," 31, 36.

<sup>8</sup> The International Institute of Strategic Studies, "Armed Conflict Database: Nigeria (Ethno-Religious Violence) Military and Security Developments," accessed 28 August 2012, [http://acd.iiss.org/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp\\_ConflictWeapons.asp?ConflictID=203&YearID=0](http://acd.iiss.org/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp_ConflictWeapons.asp?ConflictID=203&YearID=0)

Besides the actions of Boko Haram there are other serious threats to national stability. Some politically discontented northerners believe that the election of President Johnathan in 2011, a Christian from southern Nigeria, broke an informal north and south power sharing agreement. Threats have been expressed that if this agreement is not resumed in 2015 then there is the possibility of civil war.<sup>9</sup> This seeming religious unrest is not limited to the north alone. In the south, at least two ostensibly Christian movements threatened Muslims in the Niger Delta region, further increasing stresses on Nigerian security forces.<sup>10</sup> The widespread nature of these tensions is indicative of significant challenges to stability.

In addition to north-south religious tensions, another threat to stability includes a separatist movement in the Niger Delta. A group known as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has been conducting attacks against government institutions and the petroleum industry. While MEND activity has declined since the introduction of a reconciliation effort in 2009, it is still a serious concern.<sup>11</sup> Another ongoing security issue for Nigeria which has regional implications is that of piracy. Although the government has taken some action to decrease piracy, the International Maritime Bureau stated that attacks in the first quarter of 2012 were already equal to the total reported in 2011. It is suspected that the pirate attacks occurring in a border country, Benin, are the actions of pirates originating in Nigeria.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Armed Conflict Database: Nigeria (Ethno-Religious Violence) Political Trends," accessed August 28 2012, [http://acd.iiss.org/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp\\_AnnualUpdate.asp?ConflictID=203&YearID=0](http://acd.iiss.org/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp_AnnualUpdate.asp?ConflictID=203&YearID=0).

<sup>10</sup> The International Institute of Strategic Studies, "Armed Conflict Database: Nigeria (Ethno-Religious Violence) Military and Security Developments."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



All of these conditions and actors add up to a country that is a fragile state, and in Africa fragile state issues have interstate stability implications.<sup>13</sup> On the fragile state framework scale presented in Joint Publication 3-07 (Stability Operations), Nigeria experienced the failed state condition during the Biafra War of the late 1960's.<sup>14</sup> With the relative success of elections in 2007 and again in 2011 the country can now be categorized as a recovering state, although vulnerable, working its way toward normalization.<sup>15 16</sup> The security function of the state of Nigeria is tenuous, with ongoing threats to large areas of the country still largely active and contributing to issues concerning long term stability.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. should be able to assist Nigerian security forces in this area since U.S. experience in stability operations over the past two decades is relevant to ongoing peace and security aid funding.<sup>18</sup>

To handle its internal security operations, the Nigerian security forces are organized at the federal level. Criminal security is provided by a federal police force, however this force is underpaid and under-resourced across the board.<sup>19</sup> In many cases the police are an impediment to stability, and in the Niger Delta they often engage in criminal behavior and use extreme levels of force. This tends to alienate the population they are meant to protect.<sup>20</sup> The military consists of an army approximately 60,000 strong, a navy manned at about 7,000 personnel and an air force of approximately 9,000 personnel and at any time around 10% are

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<sup>13</sup> Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), "Stability Operations," Joint Publication (JP) 3-07 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 29 September 2011), I-9; Stephen Ellis, "How to Rebuild Africa," *Foreign Affairs* 84.5 (Sep/Oct 2005), accessed 15 September 2012, ProQuest, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/214287370?accountid=322>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria."

<sup>15</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Armed Conflict Database: Nigeria (Ethno-Religious Violence) Political Trends."

<sup>16</sup> CJCS, JP 3-07, I-10.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, "Nigeria's Battle for Stability," 31, 39.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria."

<sup>19</sup> Paul Francis, Deirdre Lapin, and Paula Rossiasco. *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change*. Africa Program Study (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011): 109-110

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

deployed in support of international peacekeeping operations.<sup>21</sup> Although the military has extensive peacekeeping experience abroad, this does not always translate to effectiveness at home.

Nigeria is willing to use unconventional methods to improve its internal security. Such an effort is evident in the current Joint Task Force “Operation Hope” (often referred to as just the “JTF”) which combines personnel from across the federal security forces to provide a coordinated security solution.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the federal government has not been entirely successful. The military also exhibits criminal and violent behavior, leading to the establishment of unofficial measures at the local level to provide security.<sup>23</sup> These local measures are also not effective in solving the long-term stability problems.<sup>24</sup> Security forces in the north continue to battle against elements of Boko Haram, but the deep and long-standing grievances of the population indicate this effort will require perseverance over the long-term.<sup>25</sup> Despite these chronic challenges, one of the great unknowns is how much influence western countries might have in assisting Nigeria. It is entirely possible that direct involvement of foreigners in managing the internal security situation would be a catalyst of destabilization rather than the intended assistance to establishing security.<sup>26</sup>

Nigerian leadership in Africa generally, and in western Africa more specifically, has been impressive over the years and provides another avenue for the U.S. to engage with Nigerian security forces. Despite the aforementioned internal political instability, Nigerian

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<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Nigeria.”

<sup>22</sup> Francis, Lapin, and Rossiasco. *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change*, 109.

<sup>23</sup> Judith Burdin Asuni, *Understanding the Armed Groups of the Niger Delta*. Working Paper (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, September 2009), 16.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, Lapin, and Rossiasco. *Securing Development and Peace in the Niger Delta: A Social and Conflict Analysis for Change*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, “Nigeria’s Battle for Stability,” 39.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

foreign policy has been guided by principled stances on security cooperation, peaceful conflict resolution, and the establishment of regional economic trade and development.<sup>27</sup>

Nigeria was instrumental to the creation of ECOWAS which has its headquarters in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.<sup>28</sup> Working variously with the U.N., the AU and ECOWAS, Nigeria's involvement was pivotal to the cessation of conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Cote d'Ivoire and the country is also engaged in several other peacekeeping operations.<sup>29</sup> This involvement in African stability operations is entirely consistent with Nigeria's view of itself as one of the leaders of the African continent, and is an important part of Nigeria's identity.<sup>30</sup>

### **African Union and ECOWAS**

In mid-June 2012, the Obama administration released its "U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa" in order to highlight and shape U.S. policy in much of Africa. The document lays out a framework nested in the 2010 National Security Strategy to work with African nations and institutions on four broad policy segments, to include the area of security support and development.<sup>31</sup> This section departs from the complexity of the Nigerian security environment to look at the two primary institutions in western Africa: the AU and ECOWAS. While the AU and ECOWAS are independently considered in this section, the format of the analysis is similar. Both are treated with a brief historical recounting in order to underpin important aspects of their charters and foundation. After this, each organization

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria."

<sup>28</sup> African Union, "Profile: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)," accessed 15 September 2012, <http://www.africa-union.org/Recs/ECOWASProfile.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria."

<sup>30</sup> Chris Landsberg, "Nigeria-South Africa Tensions Leave African Leadership Gap," *World Politics Review*, 18 April 2012, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/11857/nigeria-south-africa-tensions-leave-african-leadership-gap>.

<sup>31</sup> President Barack Obama, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: White House, June 2012), 2.

is examined through the lens of some of their significant operations which will show why the U.S. should be interested in their activities, particularly in the case of ECOWAS.

As noted above, security issues in Africa tend to take on a regional context whether we are discussing the violence in the Congo or in Liberia.<sup>32</sup> The colonial roots of many African conflicts should not be underestimated, tracing back to the conditions which dictated state formation and the view that these conditions resulted in “artificial” and “illegitimate” outcomes.<sup>33</sup> The multi-national, regional nature of conflict is thus not susceptible to bilateral solutions. Actions in one state, unless coordinated and understood in a framework that includes regional neighbors, may have second and third order destabilizing effects even if short term gains look promising.<sup>34</sup> In such an environment, intergovernmental organizations must fill the policy and security vacuum which states such as Nigeria are unable to manage on their own.

The evolution of the African Union (AU) out of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001 and 2002 was a step toward addressing many of these security concerns. The AU, currently comprised of 54 members, was formed to address the weaknesses of its predecessor. These weaknesses were in no small part due to inconsistencies between the OAU’s desire to fully support the concept of state sovereignty while recognizing that instability in one nation can easily spill over into other states in the region. The sovereignty principle clearly impeded the ability to address regional stability issues that were contained inside of national boundaries.<sup>35</sup> The term most often attributed to the AU today is that it

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<sup>32</sup> Ellis, “How to Rebuild Africa.”

<sup>33</sup> Solomon A. Dersso, “The Role and Place of the African Standby Force Within the African Peace and Security Architecture,” Institute for Security Studies Paper 209. Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2010), 2-3.

<sup>34</sup> Ellis, “How to Rebuild Africa.”

<sup>35</sup> Dersso, “The Role and Place of the African Standby Force,” 3-4.

embarks on a sovereignty approach of “non-indifference” rather than the OAU’s inflexible “non-interference.”<sup>36</sup>

On the surface at least, the turn away from pure sovereignty to active intervention policy appears to open the door to external assistance, however this is not the case. Paired with the AU’s shift in national sovereignty paradigm is a philosophy of African solutions for African problems, the implication being that African countries do not want external actors interfering in their governance and activities.<sup>37</sup> The AU has a host of issues that it considers important, ranging from good governance and human rights to peace and security.<sup>38</sup> While these are fairly consistent with western liberal democratic concepts, the African-centric approach limits the scope of acceptable external assistance. That is not to say that the AU does not accept external assistance. After all, African nations only pay approximately 40% of the overall budget of the AU, and consistently are unable to fund their own peacekeeping efforts.<sup>39 40</sup>

Although deeply ingrained issues of mistrust may impede engagement, other dynamics of AU stability operations offer opportunities. In some cases of conflict intervention the AU has committed significant force structure as in stability missions to Burundi, Somalia (AMISOM) and Sudan (AMIS I and II).<sup>41</sup> In other cases it has intervened during post-election crises, such as Kenya and Zimbabwe. In almost all cases it has not lived

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<sup>36</sup> Regina Jane Jere, "10 Years of the AU: The Hurdles and the Triumphs." *New African* 519 (Jul 2012): 14, accessed 15 September 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Dersso, "The Role and Place of the African Standby Force," 4.

<sup>39</sup> Jere, "10 Years of the AU," 14.

<sup>40</sup> Olufemi Babarinde, "The African Union and the Quest for Security Governance in Africa," in *The Security Governance of Regional Organizations*, ed. Emil J. Kirchner and Roberto Dominguez (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 286, 294.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 286-287, 296.

up to expectations, as in the Sudan and in both Kenya and Zimbabwe.<sup>42 43</sup> Despite these disappointments, two valuable insights can be drawn from these interventions. The first insight highlights the ability of the AU to act on a problem more quickly than the U.N. so it fills an important niche in the continuum of stability operations.<sup>44</sup> Second, in the case of Zimbabwe, the reconciliation and transition process from the contested election was largely handed off to a Regional Economic Community (REC) organization, namely the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>45</sup> Although the AU maintained a role, it is an important nuance that the sub-regional organization offered the AU another option to manage the conflict.

Even though it has had some successes, the AU is not resting on its laurels, unwilling to address its shortfalls and these initiatives at improvement present engagement opportunities as well. Since inception the AU has updated the tools required to meet its vision of peace and security maintenance. Some of these tools were adopted via an updated Peace and Security Council Protocol in 2004. This created an African Peace and Security Architecture, which has several components to include the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) to inform the AU on arising destabilizing trends, and the African Standby Force (ASF).<sup>46</sup> The ASF is regionalized, again giving credence to the rising importance of sub-regional organizations.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, funding is still a concern for both CEWS and

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<sup>42</sup> J. Olusegun Bolarinwa, "Africa's Regional Power, Priorities and the New Geopolitical Realities," *Africa Review* 2, no. 2 (July-December 2010): 191, accessed 06 October 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>43</sup> Babarinde, "The African Union and the Quest for Security Governance in Africa," 288.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Kwasi Tieku, "A Pan-African View of a New Agenda for Peace," *International Journal* 67, no. 2 (2012): 378, accessed on 20 September 2012, Proquest.

<sup>45</sup> Babarinde, "The African Union and the Quest for Security Governance in Africa," 288-289.

<sup>46</sup> Dersso, "The Role and Place of the African Standby Force," 5-6.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 7.

the ASF, which has yet to become functional.<sup>48 49</sup> Despite these difficulties, there is a rising tide of opinion that further adjustments are needed. These include a more robust non-African intervention stance along with increased sub-regional intervention authorities.<sup>50</sup>

While the AU presents opportunities, its reliance on the sub-regional organizations presents even greater potential options for engagement. Of these sub-regional organizations, the most influential and capable in western Africa is ECOWAS. Founded in 1975, it is made up of 15 members and the headquarters is located in Abuja, Nigeria.<sup>51</sup> The driving principle of ECOWAS' creation was the development of an integrated "economic, social and cultural" community.<sup>52</sup> Over time, the introduction of a peace and security effort included an agreement not to go to war with member states, followed by the implementation of a Protocol Relating to the Mutual Assistance on Defense (MPAD), and in the 1990's broader agreements on crime prevention, security and development.<sup>53</sup>

A history of ECOWAS is largely a history of Nigerian leadership and perseverance. The origins of ECOWAS intervention began in 1990 as an answer to increasing instability in Liberia.<sup>54</sup> Nigeria was asked for assistance from the leader of Liberia, but instead of acting unilaterally decided to take up the matter with ECOWAS.<sup>55</sup> Although there were significant legal hurdles to be overcome, in August 1990 the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group

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<sup>48</sup> Wafula Okumu. "The African Union: Pitfalls and Prospects for Uniting Africa," *Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 2( Spring/Summer 2009): 105, accessed 8 September 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>49</sup> Simon Allison, "Africa: Standing by to Standby – the African Peacekeeping Force With More Problems Than Solutions," *The Daily Maverick*, 15 August 2012, accessed 19 October 2012, <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-08-14-standing-by-to-standby-the-african-peacekeeping-force-with-more-problems-than-solutions>.

<sup>50</sup> Tieku, "A Pan-African View of a New Agenda for Peace," 388-389.

<sup>51</sup> African Union, "Profile: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)."

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Arthur, "ECOWAS and Regional Peacekeeping Integration in West Africa: Lessons for the Future," *Africa Today* 57, no.2 (Winter 2010): 3, accessed 02 October 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 10.

(ECOMOG) entered Liberia.<sup>56 57</sup> It was not until 1993 that the U.N. began to share peacekeeping duties with ECOMOG.<sup>58</sup> After winding down the mission in 1997, ECOWAS again intervened (largely with Nigerian forces) in 2003 to prevent a total collapse of stability, with the U.N. not activating a peacekeeping force for another two months. In another example, ECOMOG was employed to make an attempt at stabilizing Sierra Leone, and with eventual help from the U.N. this goal was accomplished.<sup>59</sup> Nigeria was again a significant leader in supporting these stability operations, and ECOWAS acted more quickly than the U.N.

To be sure, these interventions had their share of problems, but they served essential purposes, bridging to eventual U.N. peacekeeping operations. Despite the ill-disciplined conduct of military personnel, or the sometime lack of impartiality of some missions, the ECOWAS Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) in early 2003 was a fairly successful model which then handed off to the U.N. in the spring of 2004.<sup>60</sup> There remains a constant theme throughout all of ECOWAS' stability operations, namely the leadership and influence of Nigeria. This is not unexpected, as the most populous country in Africa is also one which believes it should have a prominent leadership role on the continent.<sup>61</sup>

The U.S. must work to integrate with these IGOs in Africa as it is clear that regional and sub-regional IGOs exhibit a growing influence on the security environment. A consideration is that any organization can be influenced by the whims of its varied membership and might not align with U.S. interests. During the Libya crisis the AU, which

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<sup>56</sup> William Reno, "The Regionalization of African Security," *Current History*, 111, no. 745 (May 2012): 177.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur, "ECOWAS and Regional Peacekeeping Integration in West Africa: Lessons for the Future," 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 11-12.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Landsberg, "Nigeria-South Africa Tensions Leave African Leadership Gap."



desired to establish a mediated solution, did not act in a way that supported U.S. policy in the region, and therefore was not a useful partner during the conflict. This is not necessarily indicative of weakness, it is the reality of multi-national partnerships with a diversity of goals and viewpoints.<sup>62</sup> Given the makeup of the larger IGOs it is likely that ECOWAS will act faster and more decisively than the AU or the U.N, as was the case in the 1990 Liberia intervention. Also, in cases such as Liberia where intervention was conducted over a period of more than 13 years, ECOWAS had a long-term stake in the outcome, an advantage when looking for partners in any intervention.

### **AFRICOM and Opportunity**

The first two sections of the paper showed that Nigeria is not only important to Africa, but is currently struggling to effectively execute stability operations. In addition, the regional organizations are important to African stability as well, with ECOWAS providing an excellent nexus between regional stability priorities and Nigerian security operations. If Nigeria were to enter a period of even greater instability, or outright civil war, the cases above are indicators that it would take a regional solution to assist in the recovery of the country's stability. This last section of the paper aims to analyze current and future U.S. security assistance operations in Africa in order to chart a path for U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

AFRICOM, the newest of the U.S. Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) is charged with executing military policy across the continent and must formulate and advocate for comprehensive strategies to support U.S. policy in the region. The AFRICOM mission statement's second purpose is "through sustained engagement, to enable our African partners

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<sup>62</sup> Isabella Bennett, "Guest Post: AU Failure in Libya? Maybe Not," 21 October 2011, accessed 2 October 2012, <http://blogs.cfr.org/patrick/2011/10/21/au-failure-in-libya-maybe-not/>.

to create a security environment that promotes stability, improved governance, and continued development.”<sup>63</sup> In addition, two other notable concepts in the mission statement is support for the idea that security in Africa should be managed by Africans, and the recognition of the importance of a whole of government approach to security as indicated by the interagency concentration at inception.<sup>64</sup> So, based on the historic stability concerns and policies of Nigeria and the region, it would appear that AFRICOM is at least philosophically aligned with the primary regional IGOs.

AFRICOM has established several programs to engage threats to U.S. interests. The first, and maybe best known, is Operation ENDURING FREEDOM – Trans Sahel (OEF-TS) inherited from U.S. European Command. OEF-TS supports a State Department initiative named the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) by executing training and equipment support activities with partner nations, to include Chad, Niger and Nigeria among others.<sup>65</sup> In addition, programs like the African Partner Station (APS) which is geared towards maritime security and anti-piracy, and Exercise Africa Endeavor (AE), which is a multi-national communications exercise, leverage African and U.S. interests that align.<sup>66 67</sup> However, even given the outstanding efforts of these and other programs like them, there is a significant shortfall in the U.S. ability to engage IGOs for a more comprehensive unity of effort.

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<sup>63</sup> About United States Africa Command, U.S. Africa Command, last modified August 2011, <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, U.S. Africa Command, accessed on 17 September 2012, <http://www.africom.mil/tsctp.asp>.

<sup>66</sup> Jeanne Karstens, "United States Africa Command: Helping Build Security and Stability," *Armed Forces Comptroller*, 56, no.4 ( Fall 2011): 21, accessed 17 September 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Africa Command Fact Sheet, "Exercise Africa Endeavor," U.S. Africa Command, last modified October 2012, <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=8345>.

Funding efforts for stability and security in Africa are multiple, and are spread across the Department of State and Department of Defense.<sup>68</sup> Foreign security assistance is lumped into different categories, such as International Military Education and Training (IMET) or foreign military financing (FMF) and each subset has its own rules governing resource allocation.<sup>69 70</sup> All told, AFRICOM is dealing with more than 25 funding and authorities streams that are restricted to bi-lateral allocation because there is no comprehensive authority to work with regional organizations or hybrid (military and federal police combined, for instance) security organizations.<sup>71 72</sup> Complicating this, although for good reason, are oversight rules such as the Leahy vetting process which prohibit assistance to military forces that violate standards of human rights conduct.<sup>73</sup>

It is possible that integration with sub-regional organizations is not an appropriate course of action for AFRICOM. The Leahy vetting process and its concern for human rights can just as easily be applied to regional organizations that in most cases have members whose conduct is objectionable. But preventing engagement on these premises may overlook potential influence on these actors through the regional organization as well as discounting common ground on which to act that does not present the government with ethical dilemmas. Another possible argument against the sub-regional organizations is that their activities should be restricted in the absence of U.N. sanction. However, cases already cited show that the U.N. does not always act quickly enough and the paralysis induced by the political fault

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<sup>68</sup> Derek S. Reveron, "Weak States and Security Assistance," *Prism*, 1, no.3 (June 2010): 31.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Karstens, Karstens, "United States Africa Command: Helping Build Security and Stability," 22.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Laura R. Varhola and Christopher H. Varhola, "Closing the Gap Between Strategic Ends and Ways," *Prism*, 2, no. 4 (September 2011): 103-104.

<sup>73</sup> An Overview of the Leahy Vetting Process, U.S. Department of State, last modified 14 May 2012, <http://www.humanrights.gov/2011/10/06/an-overview-of-the-leahy-vetting-process/>.

lines on the U.N. Security Council will sometimes demand regional action.<sup>74</sup> The argument that the U.N. will always be the judge of necessary action is a relic of the cold war and should not be a barrier to successful regional organization integration.<sup>75</sup>

Unity of effort suffers when AFRICOM is forced to conduct much of its security work through bi-lateral relationships, rather than with the larger, regional organizations that do much of the heavy lifting in Africa where stability operations are concerned. A recent exercise sponsored by AFRICOM in eastern Africa is an example of this because it was coordinated in a bi-lateral fashion but conflicted with a regional organization's training exercises.<sup>76</sup> Rather than pool resources with these organizations, AFRICOM and the countries involved were unable to make the most efficient use of funding and time and undoubtedly lost significant value accordingly. Yet another example comes from implementation of the TSCTP, which rather than aligning with ASF initiatives and priorities, is forced to work bi-laterally to achieve multi-national coordination efforts.<sup>77</sup>

These fiscal restrictions create a divergence between U.S. strategic intentions and the tools given to AFRICOM to manage its security initiatives. A good example of the complexities that AFRICOM might have to navigate in stability operations can be seen in the responses to Mali's security problems since a coup in March. The lack of a legitimate government makes direct, bilateral intervention difficult for AFRICOM, which had been working with Malian security forces prior to the coup, and where U.S. aid under the category of peace and security were at \$3.1 million in FY12.<sup>78</sup> <sup>79</sup> In northern Mali, Al-Qaeda

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<sup>74</sup> Arthur, "ECOWAS and Regional Peacekeeping Integration in West Africa: Lessons for the Future," 20.

<sup>75</sup> Dersso, "The Role and Place of the African Standby Force," 3, 16.

<sup>76</sup> Varhola and Varhola, "Closing the Gap Between Strategic Ends and Ways," 99.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>78</sup> The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, U.S. Africa Command.

affiliates have been active in wresting control from weakened government forces. Despite involvement by the U.N. and AU, ECOWAS was the first responder with respect to military forces.<sup>80</sup> Regardless of authorization and action by the U.N. or the AU, the ECOWAS countries have the greatest stake and can be expected to provide the bulk of forces to execute stability operations. AFRICOM is best served by exercising direct assistance to ECOWAS, rather than with individual states. U.S. experience in coalitions, as well as stability operations, should be significant capabilities that AFRICOM could leverage in engagement with the sub-regional organization. Operations in Mali have the potential to bear fruit across multiple U.S. security lines, to include support of Nigerian security forces and potential dislodgement of AQIM fighters. Without integration with ECOWAS, it is unlikely that either one of these security goals will reach their full potential.

### **Recommendations and Closing**

AFRICOM has a delicate and important task ahead of it in efforts to support a better state of security in Nigeria given the current environment and the potential for further decline in conditions there. There are some actions AFRICOM can take in order to improve its ability to influence the course of events in Nigeria and in the greater western African region. First, Nigeria has significant internal security issues presenting the country with a host of issues that fall into the category of stability operations. Because of this, AFRICOM must maintain, if not increase, its current bi-lateral efforts to train the Nigerian military. Second, and easily nesting with the first recommendation, is that AFRICOM must engage with

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<sup>79</sup> Mali –ForeignAssistance.gov, U.S. Department of State, last accessed on 27 October 2012, [http://foreignassistance.gov/OU.aspx?OUID=209&FY=2012&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab\\_Bud\\_Planned&tabID=tab\\_sct\\_Peace\\_Planned](http://foreignassistance.gov/OU.aspx?OUID=209&FY=2012&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab_Bud_Planned&tabID=tab_sct_Peace_Planned).

<sup>80</sup> Faith Karimi and Katarina Hoijs, “International Leaders Push for Military Intervention in Mali,” CNN, 19 October 2012, accessed on 21 October 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/19/world/africa/mali-intervention-meeting/index.html>.

ECOWAS in the implementation of multi-national counter-terrorism initiatives. This step would set the conditions for greater U.S. and regional unity of effort with the additional benefit that it would bring an interstate solution to a portion of Nigeria's internal security problems, namely the rise of Boko Haram.

The first two steps can have concrete effects on Nigerian security over the short and medium term. The third recommendation is a step to more comprehensively engage in regional security efforts while recognizing, appropriately, the leadership of Nigeria in this area. AFRICOM should work to develop a comprehensive post-conflict stability operations strategy that fully supports the AU and ECOWAS philosophy of peace enforcement and conflict resolution in Africa. By doing so, AFRICOM legitimizes regional aspirations and goals while at the same time supporting the outstanding efforts of Nigeria in this line of regional security effort. The final recommendation is somewhat out of AFRICOM's control, but directly affects its ability to work with the regional organizations on peace and security. AFRICOM should submit a comprehensive review, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State, on the most effective and efficient way to provide resources and authorities which support the second and third recommendations above. Without a push to revisit how the U.S. executes foreign security assistance much of our effort in Africa will be more difficult as Africans institute regional solutions while we only authorize an outdated bi-lateral engagement regimen.

The implications to Nigerian security over the short- to long-term time horizons are significant. Working by, with and through ECOWAS, AFRICOM gains a stronger relationship with Nigeria, one of the organization's most influential leaders. In addition, this directly supports execution of stability operations by lending legitimacy to Nigeria's regional

leadership and setting the conditions for interstate solutions. Answers to worsening or catastrophic destabilization in Nigeria are not likely to come from powers external to the region, but more likely from ECOWAS countries or the AU. By balancing bi-lateral and regional engagement activities in all phases of engagement with Nigerian security forces, AFRICOM will significantly enhance its capability to achieve its goals resulting in a more stable Africa.

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